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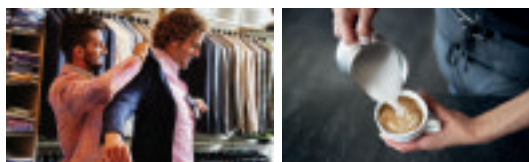
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Campaigners vow to fight on as maternity services downgraded

Campaigners outside the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford following the decision to temporarily downgrade the Horton's maternity unit



'SOMEBODY IS GOING TO DIE'

FALLOUT continued this week as campaigners criticised a decision to downgrade the maternity unit at the Horton General Hospital.

Leading Banbury politicians have also signed a cross-party letter to Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust against the move to halt obstetrics services.

The decision was made by health bosses last week after efforts to fill vacant middle-grade posts at the unit ended in disappointment.

It means specialists will move out of the Horton so high-risk pregnancies and women experiencing difficulties during labour will have to travel to the John Radcliffe Hospital in Oxford.

Speaking after last Wednesday's decision, Banbury resident Jan Bennett, 52, said: "My youngest had to be resuscitated at birth. It was 'low-risk' and she would have never made it to the JR."

"My middle daughter was taken in an ambulance at nine o'clock at night with no traffic. It took 50 minutes. Someone

Hannah Somerville
hsomerville@nqo.com

is going to die in the back of an ambulance."

Keep the Horton General group leader Keith Strangwood said he felt "deflated" but added: "The fight goes on."

"The trust planners have pulled the wool over the eyes of the board of directors, the same as the people of North Oxfordshire."

Between 700 and 1,000 more women with 'high-risk' pregnancies or in need of emergency interventions could now give birth at the JR over the course of a year.

Capacity in Oxford will be boosted with extra delivery rooms, postnatal beds and special care cots added and elective caesareans moved out of the delivery suite.

The Horton will now operate a midwife-led unit (MLU), with a single midwife and support worker on hand

at all times and a dedicated ambulance on site.

Kieron Mallon and Steve Kilsby, the Conservative and Labour group leaders for Banbury Town Council, signed a cross-party letter with county council Green leader David Williams, local UKIP chairman Dickie Bird and Liberal Democrat parliamentary candidate John Howson in which they described the decision as "wrong".

■ Continued on page 2

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Biscuits and tea on Mars mission

AN OXFORDSHIRE man who spent a year 'on Mars' has revealed cups of tea and Jammie Dodgers kept him going.

Andrzej Stewart, originally from Banbury, came back to reality last week after 365 days in an isolated space dome with five strangers.

In an interview with the *Mail on Sunday*, the 34-year-old said he learnt to play the guitar and was allowed a single, minute-long cold shower each week.

But his mum's supplies of tea bags, chocolate digestives, Jammie Dodgers and a pair of slippers from Tesco helped him through the experiment.

The group spent a year in a cramped inflatable dome in Hawaii that was intended to simulate life on Mars, pictured, for astronauts who may one day venture there.

They were paid just £12,000 and survived on freeze-dried food, with their electronic communications to the outside world delayed by 20 minutes to replicate how long it would take to communicate between Mars and Earth.

Mr Stewart said the ban on internet access – apart from Wikipedia and a government-run weather site – made him realise how much time he wasted "looking at cat videos on YouTube".

The father-of-one, who now lives in Denver, USA, said tempers flared at times in the dome as arguments broke out over things like how to do the washing up.

It is hoped the experiment will allow NASA to tackle one of the big problems of sending humans deep into space: the ability of astronauts to get along together in a small environment for long periods of time.



Downgrading NHS unit 'would put lives at risk'

Continued from page 1

It states: "As we stood together the last time the services were under threat 10 years ago, so we are today, united in opposition to the decision taken."

"Downgrading the unit to a midwife-only service will put the lives of both mothers and babies at risk."

Former prime minister David Cameron said he had spoken with OUH chief executive Bruno Holthof, pushing for guarantees that the unit will be returned.

The Witney MP said: "Local mums want to have their babies in their local hospital and a midwife-led unit won't be able to look after all mothers' needs."

"The importance of this service to local people is very clear to see from the public outpouring of concern."

"I have been reassured by Dr Holthof that the Trust are doing everything they can to recruit obstetricians and will continue trying to recruit the needed staff."

Consultant-led services are being suspended at the Horton from October due to a chronic shortage of staff, with just three doctors due to be in post by September.

Roles are being advertised at premium rates and OUH has promised to increase the contract length to more than 12 months to make posts "as attractive as possible".



Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust chief executive Dr Bruno Holthof, medical director Tony Berendt and clinical director of women's services Dr Veronica Miller at a press conference following the decision; right, Keith Strangwood

At the end of October the trust will review the situation to see if it is possible to restore a full service by March 2017.

After the decision last week, Dr Holthof said: "We are extremely disappointed to be in this position."

"We would prefer to be maintaining the obstetric service at the Horton. However, we clearly cannot run a service without doctors to provide it."

"This outcome reflects national difficulties in recruiting to obstetrics. We will continue with our ambition to reinstate the obstetric service at the Horton as well as the Special Care Baby Unit that goes alongside it, as soon as we have the staff to operate safely."



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Armed post office robber gets six years

A MAN has been jailed for six years for the armed robbery of a post office in Banbury.

Danny Walsh, 25, of no fixed abode, pleaded guilty to one count of robbery and one count of possession of a firearm at Oxford Crown Court yesterday.

He was sentenced to six years' imprisonment for robbery and four years' imprisonment for possession of a firearm. The sentences are due to run concurrently.

At about 3.20pm on July 30 this year, Walsh entered the Easington Post Office in Horton View and threatened staff with what appeared to be a black handgun.

Cash was handed over to Walsh, who then fled on foot.

Thames Valley Police released an appeal to find Walsh, who was arrested four days later.

Investigating officer Det Con Mark Personius said: "I am delighted that Walsh, who is an extremely dangerous offender, demonstrated by the fact he used a handgun during the robbery, is now behind bars for a considerable period of time.

"Thanks to excellent CCTV images Walsh was quickly identified as our suspect and we published a wanted appeal to the public and media.

"We also shared this appeal with Sussex Police because we had intelligence that Walsh was in Brighton, and so it proved to be as

he was arrested there just four days after the offence.

"I am pleased for the victims in this case, who thought their lives were in danger when Walsh entered the post office with a handgun.

"Hopefully the victims will now feel that justice has been served. "I would like to thank all officers and staff at Thames Valley Police who worked on this investigation, Sussex Police for helping to share our appeal and assisting with the arrest of Walsh, and the media and public whose response to our wanted appeal was crucial in locating Walsh."

Walsh was also ordered to pay a victim surcharge of £170.

Be phone friend to lonely people

Age UK has had funding cut and needs volunteers for Phone Friend service

Hannah Somerville
hsomerville@nqo.com

MORE friendly voices are needed to join an anti-loneliness service as a charity rallies in the face of a deepening funding crisis.

Every week hundreds of calls are made from Age UK Oxfordshire's Banbury offices to isolated elderly people across the county, as part of its Phone Friends service.

Many of them have no one else to talk to.

But co-ordinator Paula Donaldson said the service was on its knees after recent cuts.

In March, Phone Friends – which was the focus of the 2015 Lonely this Christmas campaign by the *Cake's* sister paper the *Oxford Mail* – lost £33,000 in yearly funding from Oxfordshire County Council.

Mrs Donaldson said: "We are doing everything we can to raise money. We have something like £3,500 from Sanctuary Housing to support their tenants in Oxfordshire but apart from that there's nothing.

"It's such a fabulous service that reaches the most isolated, housebound people in Oxfordshire. I can't see how as a charity it's possible not to run it."

So far about £11,000 has been brought in from fundraising activities and the service is being supported by Age UK Oxfordshire from its own funds.

Volunteers call older people in the county once a week for 20 minutes to check in, ensure they are safe and secure, and have a chat.

At present 42 volunteers call about 280 people in the county each week over the course of 33 shifts. All recipients are aged over 55 and most live alone.

Mrs Donaldson said: "At Phone Friends we never have a waiting list and I never want one.

"The more volunteers we have, the more flexibility I've got in matching clients. Volunteers get as much out of the call as the phone friends. You come out of here with a smile on your face."



Paula Donaldson at the offices of Age UK Oxfordshire in Banbury; left, Dr Anthony Cohen, a Phone Friend

There are no set skills required to volunteer; only the ability to get to Banbury for initial training and vetting, after which calls can be made by the volunteer from home.

A normal shift takes place once a week for two hours, with approximately eight people called per shift.

Dr Anthony Cohen, who lives in central Oxford, signed up in June this year after retiring from his role as a geology lecturer at the Open University.

Following his training he was paired up with a group of eight older people, some of whom

served in the Second World War and now live alone or are recently bereaved.

The 61-year-old said: "I wanted to do a little bit of volunteering and thought Phone Friends sounded interesting. It is extremely rewarding. The people on my list have really become friends in a relatively short time and they appreciate the call, and look forward to it."

The Phone Friends office is moving next week to a new space in South Bar Street, Banbury.

For more information on the role, email volunteering@ageukoxfordshire.org.uk

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Bands take to stage for vulnerable

MUSICIANS will get together and play a gig in Banbury next week for a local charity supporting vulnerable young people.

The 'BYHP Rocks' event on September 16 will feature a series of bands taking to the stage in the town hall in aid of the Banbury Young Homelessness Project.

Live music in the historic venue will begin at 8pm with all proceeds from ticket sales going to the charity, which provides counselling to those with chaotic or difficult lives and finds cost-effective accommodation to keep people at risk of homelessness safe.

Talented performers Lindsey-May Cooper, Katy Jackson, Deslynn Smith, Isaac Stuart, Erin Tiger Lilley, Charlie Leavy and Jake Melles will take part.

The event is being organised by local mother-of-two Sarah Lilley, who said: "My own children have had a much more privileged home life than the young people who access BYHP and the charity needs a lot of funding to continue the work it does in our community."

"All we need is to sell all 150 tickets and raise the most money we can."

Tickets cost £8 in advance or £10 on the door from Naomi's Cafe in Bridge Street, Sarah Lilley on 0786 6264642 or BYHP on 01295 259442.

Harry Potter and the Festivities of Summer



Wizard fun at Banbury Old Town Party

Pictures: Neil Simmons



MAGICAL creatures and occult attractions helped Banbury transform into a Harry Potter themed world as locals donned their best robes for the Old Town Summer Party.

The event on Saturday saw Muggles and wizards alike converge on Butchers Row, Church Lane & Walk, Cornhill, Market Place, Parsons Street, St Mary's Church and White Lion Walk to celebrate the spectacular offering of local traders – and enjoy the annual Street Organ Festival at the same time.

This year Church Lane was transformed into a scene from the JK Rowling books for the day, with visitors indulging in Potteresque mischief while exploring independent shops.

At the Rebel Hair salon, spellbound visitors peered in wonder at a bubbling 'cauldron', while grown-ups sampled 'firewhisky' and 'butterbeer' in pubs.

Face painting and watercolour demonstrations took place in the streets, with four stilt-walkers dressed as giant sentient trees thundering past.

Bankside resident Deb Simmons, whose husband, Neil photographed the event, said: "It was really good. It rained but my understanding is that's a rule."

"There was so much for the kids to get involved with and the costumes were really cute."

"Shopkeepers got really into it; in the core area they all work together so well. There's a lot of camaraderie between them and you can feel that when they're out on the street."

Organ grinders in quaint traditional dress kept crowds entertained throughout while raising funds for the Banbury & District Samaritans.

Banbury Town Council leader Kieron Mallon said: "It was another great success."

Our £10k funded food bank's fridge

Application process now open for Banbury Cake owner's annual grants

Annabal Bagdi
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COMMUNITY champions waging war on food poverty across the city say they owe a debt of gratitude to the Gannett Foundation.

Volunteers at the Oxford Food Bank were in high spirits when they were handed a £10,000 grant by the Banbury Cake's parent company Gannett Media five years ago.

Co-director of the charity Robin Aitken said the cash made an "enormous difference", allowing volunteers to buy a much-needed refrigeration unit.

Mr Aitken said the timely grant came just a couple of years after the charity launched.

He added: "The Oxford Food Bank owes the Gannett Foundation a debt because without its help we wouldn't have been able to start in the way we did."

The charity, which is based at Botley's Curtis Industrial Estate, helps to feed the community by collecting food from supermarkets and wholesalers before delivering it to about 60 charities across the city.



David Cairns, left, and Robin Aitken



About 120 volunteers dedicate their time to the charity, distributing between 10 and 12 tonnes of produce to those in need each week.

Mr Aitken said before getting

the cash to buy the large chiller unit, the charity was getting by using ordinary refrigerators.

He urged others to apply for the grant, which is now open for applications.

He said: "The important thing was it came when we were quite a small and young charity."

"When you are a small start-up charity, getting that sort of money makes a huge difference. It's not just the money itself."

"You get some sort of validation from being recognised for doing something worthwhile."

Each year the Banbury Cake calls on charities, community groups and projects to apply for a slice of funding worth up to £10,000 each, to support good causes across the county.

The scheme, part of the firm's charity arm Gannett Foundation, runs annually and has helped secure the future for many smaller charities since the late 1990s.

This year's application process is now open.

The special theme for this year is the needs of rural communities, but all applications meeting the general criteria will be given equal consideration by the foundation's trustees.

■ Applications need to be submitted by Friday, October 14. Forms can be found at banburycake.co.uk/gannettfoundation

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Dying sex abuse victim pleased attacker jailed

56-year-old was raped and subjected to sadistic abuse at children's home aged 12

Michael Race
mrace@nqo.com

A DYING man who was sexually abused as a boy by a children's home boss says he is comforted after seeing his attacker finally punished for his horrific crimes.

Rodney Smallman subjected boys across the country to sadistic abuse in the 1970s and 1980s when he was supposed to be looking after them.

Last year, Smallman, of Erica Close, Banbury, was jailed for 12-and-a-half years at Oxford Crown Court after being found guilty of 15 counts of indecent assault on male children.

On August 8, this was extended by four years after he pleaded guilty at Manchester Crown Court to 12 sex crimes against more boys.

One of Smallman's victims – Michael Hands, 56 – who has just months to live, said he was pleased no other children would be harmed.

Mr Hands, who suffers from lung



Michael Hands, left, and Rodney Smallman

fibrosis, waived his right to anonymity to speak about his ordeal at Holmlea in Salford.

Ending up in the care system at age 10 after his parents found eight children too much to cope with, he was targeted by Smallman two years later.

The Manchester-born man told how Smallman raped him



and locked him in a room for a week.

He said: "The first time he used a weapon. I was pouring in blood. He put me in the bath and filled it up with cold water.

"You do not understand death when you're 12 years old but you just realised what was coming.

"He used to dump my head un-

der the water in the bath until I was gasping for air. Blood was pouring out of me, but he never called a doctor – he never told anyone.

"I haven't had a bath since then. I only ever go in the shower. It really has affected me. I was one of the worst cases."

Mr Hands said he went to the police station as a child, but was told he was lying to avoid going back to the home.

The stepfather-of-four said over the years his memories of his trauma would come back when watching documentaries and films such as the *Color Purple*.

Mr Hands said he first spoke out to police about his horrific experiences in 2014 after he saw a website by abuse lawyers asking for victims in care homes to come forward.

He added: "I was on the internet and this website had a list of homes where people had been abused and it said Holmlea, I knew it was time to go to the police then.

"He will die in prison, but the longer he lives the more he will suffer in prison. My family have all been supportive of me. I wanted to protect children more than anything."

Hooray for hockey

HOCKEY enthusiasts of all ages are welcome to participate in this year's HockeyFest event in Banbury.

Organisers hope players will be inspired to join in the fun after witnessing the GB women's hockey team shoot their way to a gold medal in this year's Olympic Games.

The event will be casual and seeks to promote the friendly, social, and community aspects of hockey. It will take place at the Banbury Hockey Club located at North Oxfordshire Academy on Sunday, September 11, from 10am-4pm.

In 2015, there were 335 hockey clubs present nationwide at the sport celebration. With an equal split between male and female participants and of varying ages, it was popular among families and those of all skill levels.

Brickie spared jail

A BRICKLAYER who left his victim needing 12 staples in a four-inch cut to his scalp has been handed a suspended sentence.

Adam Wells admitted unlawfully wounding Russell Lawton in Banbury on October 6 last year.

The 28-year-old was given a one year-sentence, suspended for two years, at Oxford Crown Court last week after admitting the offence on the first day of his trial.

Wells, of no fixed abode, must also pay a victim surcharge.

French food dates

THOSE who fancy French cuisine will be in good company this week as a popular French market drops by.

Savoir Fayre will make stops in Bicester and Banbury to allow shoppers the chance to try continental cuisine like fresh croissants, baguettes, preserves, oils and cheeses.

Savoir Fayre takes place at Cornhill Market Place in Banbury tomorrow and Sheep Street in Bicester on Saturday and Sunday.

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Uncertainty over KS2 SATS slated

PRIMARY school pupils in Oxfordshire performed strongly in tougher SATS tests, but experts said results could have been even better without "Whitehall meddling".

Education expert Prof John Howson criticised the government for creating uncertainty, while headteacher Lynn Knapp said controversy around the exams had not helped children.

Figures released by the government showed 52 per cent of key stage two pupils in the county achieved the "expected standard" – one percentage point lower than the national average.

The SATS were criticised by many teachers who said they were poorly designed and would not reflect children's abilities. The government was also criticised for not being clear about how the tests would work and what the outcomes would be.

Windmill Primary School headteacher Mrs Knapp said: "All the way through we were not sure what the outcomes were and how they would be measured."

"This year, to be in line with the national average is good because we are at least where we should be. We were working in the dark to some extent. I would think next year we will be higher than the average."

She praised teachers for helping pupils achieve strong results despite the uncertainty. She said: "It has been the most stressful year for teachers, so to come out with these results is quite refreshing."

Teaching unions warned they would boycott the 2017 tests unless significant changes were made, with particular concerns over the moderation of teacher-assessed writing assessments.

Prof Howson said: "All of the uncertainty has combined to probably knock a couple of percentage points off the average grade in Oxfordshire."

He said: "Our children are being affected by Whitehall meddling."

Runner at the double to help children's hospice

Lee Davies, from Banbury, who will take on two runs over this autumn for Helen & Douglas House Hospice



Father-of-two takes on two races to support terminally ill youngsters

Hannah Somerville
hsomerville@nqo.com

A RUNNER is taking on two races in a bid to raise money for a children's hospice.

Father-of-two Lee Davies, 50, from Banbury, is taking on the so-called Autumn Double within two weeks of each other to raise at least £500 for Helen & Douglas House, in Magdalen Road.

The first event is the Ridgeway Run on Saturday, September 24 – a 10-mile trail run around Ashbury and the surrounding downs, in the south of Oxfordshire.

He will then take a two-week break before pulling on his orange T-shirt to run the Oxford Half Marathon on his 51st birthday, on Sunday, October 9.

Joking about the challenge Davies said: "I will be saving some breath for blowing out my candles."

Helen & Douglas House

provides end-of-life care for terminally ill children, young adults and their families and relies on donations for 85 per cent of its annual budget.

Mr Davies said: "It's a local charity, a good cause and deserves support".

Over the last few weekends Mr Davies has trained hard to ensure he is up for the runs.

He said: "The Ridgeway Run will be a new experience for me, so I am not really sure what to expect."

Hannah Barrett, Helen & Douglas House's events fundraising manager, said she was delighted he was supporting them.

She added: "It's really great that Lee is taking on the Autumn Double for us. It's a brilliant challenge for runners of all abilities and both events are in fantastic locations."

Supporters are invited to join Mr Davies on one or both of the challenges.

The hospice still has places available in its name and anyone interested in taking part should contact the fundraising team on 01865 799150.

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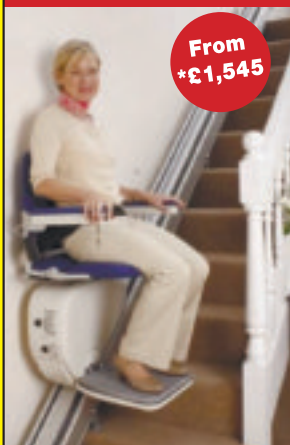
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New Ben Hur is not an epic

BEN-HUR (12A, 123 mins) Drama/Romance/Action. Jack Huston, Toby Kebbell, Morgan Freeman, Pilou Asbaek, Nazanin Boniadi, Rodrigo Santoro, Ayelet Zurer, Sofia Black D'Elia, James Cosmo. **Director:** Timur Bekmambetov

KAZAKH-Russian director Timur Bekmambetov's muscular remake of the historical epic, based on the novel *Ben-Hur: A Tale Of The Christ*, has big sandals to fill.

A 1925 silent version starring Ramon Novarro was one of the most expensive films of the era and garnered effusive critical praise.

William Wyler's 1959 reimagining, shot in lustrous CinemaScope with Charlton Heston as the eponymous slave, commanded another gargantuan budget.

Critics fumbled for superlatives and the film received a record 11 Academy Awards including Best Picture and Director.

Bekmambetov's rendition won't be nominated for an Oscar, let alone win a coveted golden statuette – not even for the slick digital effects in the climatic chariot race.

This *Ben-Hur* isn't a sermon of rollicking entertainment to the secular multiplex masses. Scriptwriters Keith Clarke and John Ridley hark back to the source novel and emphasize the religious elements, expanding the presence of Jesus (Rodrigo Santoro) in the title character's odyssey of forgiveness.

A silky smooth narration courtesy of Morgan Freeman introduces Judah Ben-Hur (Jack Huston), whose influential Jewish family adopts Roman best friend Messala Severus (Toby Kebbell).

The two men are as fiercely competitive and loyal as blood brothers, but Messala always feels slightly distant from his adoptive mother, Naomi (Ayelet Zurer).

In order to find his place in the world, Messala turns his back

on a burgeoning romance with Ben-Hur's sister Tirzah (Sofia Black D'Elia) and enlists in the Roman army.

Three years later, the men are reunited in Roman-occupied Jerusalem where Messala has been entrusted with guaranteeing the safe passage of governor Pontius Pilate (Pilou Asbaek).

Unfortunately, a zealot harboured by Ben-Hur makes an attempt on Pilate's life and Ben-Hur is condemned to hard labour as a galley slave under the yoke of captain Quintus Arias (James Cosmo).

A cruel twist of fate delivers Ben-Hur into the clutches of Nubian Sheik Ilderim (Freeman), who helps the embittered Jew to exact revenge against his adoptive brother.

Ben-Hur might be the shortest version of the story committed to celluloid thus far but Bekmambetov's picture noticeably drags.

Huston and Kebbell are solid though neither possesses the charisma of an A-list leading man like Heston.

Faith conquers all, but audiences who keep the faith with Bekmambetov's film won't be rewarded in this lifetime.

Or the next. **ANTHROPOID (15, 120 mins) Thriller/War/Action/Romance.** Cillian Murphy, Jamie Dornan, Anna Geislerova, Charlotte Le Bon, Toby Jones, Harry Lloyd, Jiri Simek, Detlef Bothe, Alena Mihulova, Bill Milner, Sean Mahon. **Director:** Sean Ellis

The Second World War was the deadliest conflict in human history and irrevocably altered the political landscape of entire continents.

Between 1939 and 1945, only one high-ranking Nazi officer was assassinated as a result of a government-sanctioned operation and Sean Ellis' wartime thriller dramatises this covert mission.

Co-written by Anthony Frewin, *Anthropoid* charts



Toby Kebbell plays Messala Severus and Jack Huston plays Judah Ben-Hur in *Ben-Hur*; inset, Cillian Murphy as Josef Gabcik and Jamie Dornan as Jan Kubis in *Anthropoid*

events between December 1941 and June 1942, when a small group of Czechs targeted Reinhard Heydrich, one of the main architects of the Holocaust.

The rebels' sacrifice, which culminated in a firefight at the Orthodox Cathedral of Saints Cyril and Methodius in Prague, should be rich source material for a rousing tale of daring and courage against overwhelming odds.

Surprisingly, Ellis' picture is almost devoid of suspense as the plot to kill Heydrich gathers momentum and it's only really in the final act that *Anthropoid* musters a sense of urgency worthy of the real-life heroes.

undeniably tedious in places, and won't be remembered as one of this brilliant writer's finest works. **Out Of Bounds by Val McDermid is published in hardback by Little, Brown, priced £18.99 (ebook £9.99)**

DCI Karen Pirie has an uncanny knack for treading on toes, but that is what makes her such a good police officer. The head of Police Scotland's Historic Case Unit, Pirie comes across two unrelated cases, one linked firmly to a fresh death. She has to unearth the connection between a new murder inquiry and a terrorist bombing from decades ago, at the same time as following a DNA trail to give the relatives and friends of a deceased hairdresser closure. Val McDermid is a much celebrated crime author with an attention to detail which makes her stories both gripping and totally authentic. In *Out Of Bounds*, multi-award winner McDermid is at the height of her game.

Cake Bookworm

Queen Bees: Six Brilliant And Extraordinary Society Hostesses Between The Wars by Sian Evans is published in hardback by Two Roads, priced £20 (ebook £9.99)

THE ultra-rich "society hostess" was a phenomenon which developed in London and New York between the two world wars. This book by Sian Evans tells the story of these formidable and intelligent women, who, by means of lavish entertaining, sought influence and power over leading politicians and famous people in the creative arts. Three of the hostesses – Nancy Astor, Emerald Cunard and Laura Corrigan – were American in origin. The three British-born hostesses were Lady Sybil Colefax, Lady Edith Londonderry and Mrs Ronnie Greville. This delightful book is crammed with fascinating anecdotes about people enjoying a privileged lifestyle, which would be permanently changed by the Second World War.

The Schooldays Of Jesus by JM Coetzee is published in hardback by Harvill Secker, priced £17.99 (ebook £9.99)

JM COETZEE'S novels are generally bleak, unconventional, and full of hidden meanings. Yet most of the time this is a recipe for success. For instance, *Disgrace*, which examines post-apartheid South Africa, is a brilliant, unforgettable read. Unfortunately, *The Schooldays Of Jesus* doesn't quite match up. The tale follows Simon, Ines and their adopted son David, who have moved to the city of Estrella for a new life. David is then enrolled in the Academy Of Dance, and this prompts a rather uninteresting debate over whether it is better to learn through science or art. If you loved *The Childhood Of Jesus*, the prequel to this tale, it's certainly worth giving this a go. Keen Coetzee fans will also appreciate the many metaphors and themes in the writing. However, this is

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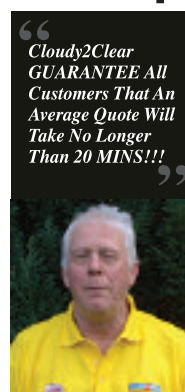
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& Abingdon areas and manager James Miller agrees that this approach is a major factor in his success. 'The truth is that it's not just the personal satisfaction that I get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense. I get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people I've done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated as both my customers and, obviously a body as nationally important as Which? now recognise.' So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give James a call for a free quotation on 0800 61 21 118 and he'll be happy to help!



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Oxfordshire Listings

Events

THURSDAY

Drayton Sequence Dance: Drayton Village Hall, Lockway, Drayton. 7.30pm. £2. 01235 531701.

Grove RFC Girls' Rugby: Grove RFC, Recreation Lane, Grove. Grove RFC offers contact rugby union for girls aged 11 to 18 in three age groups led by RFU qualified coaches. 7pm. Annual membership £85 after three free sessions. 07970 292322.

Ramblers walk: By Fox PH, Ibstone. 6½-mile walk via Turville Heath. Pub stop at end. 10am. 01844 352438.

Rhythm and Dance: Rugrats and Halfpints, Beaumont Road, Banbury. 11am. Free with standard entrance price to centre. 01295 250060.

West Oxon Decorative and Fine Arts Society: Methodist Church, High Street, Witney. Lecture by Jane Gardiner. The Golden Age of Venetian Glass. 7.30pm. Guests and visitors £6. 01993 776568.

FRIDAY

Ardley with Fewcott Village Hall Beer & Cider Festival: Playing Fields, Ardley Road, Fewcott. More than 25 barrels of real ale and craft ciders, live music and entertainment as well as a BBQ. Plus Pimms and Prosecco Bar. This year, we are also opening up the field to campers and caravanners. Email chair@ardleywithfewcottvillagehall.com 6pm.

The Creation Station: The Emmanuel Church, Barbary Place, Bure Park, Bicester. New creative classes, to support parents and carers with babies and toddlers. The classes have been developed in line with the Early Years Foundation Stage, to nurture parenting skills and to develop essential bonds. The 'Baby Discover' classes have been developed for babies aged five to 14 months and the 'Little Explorer' classes and for toddlers aged 15 months to five years. 9.30am. 07724 321930.

SATURDAY

A Journey Into Spirit with spirit medium Paul Cissell: Regal Centre Wallingford, 9 St Martin's Street, Wallingford. Buy advance tickets at www.eventbrite.co.uk/paulcissell/wallingford. 7.30pm. £4 or £8 on the door.

Bicester and Kidlington Ramblers: Ewepen Buildings, Sherborne Park (off A40) Sherborne, Gloucestershire. Moderate 10-mile circular walk in the Windrush Valley. Picnic lunch. Leaders Chris and Derek Parish. 10am.

Come get inspired... Go green your home! Benson Place, Oxford.

Pioneering owners of some of the UK's most eco-friendly SuperHomes are hosting free open days this September. SuperHomes are older homes refurbished by their owners for greater comfort, lower bills and fewer carbon emissions – at least 60 per cent less. SuperHomers Tim Nicholson and Joanne Bowlm made the decision to cut their carbon emissions and first considered buying a plot to build a new eco home. Finally they chose to retrofit an older house instead. Full details, including directions, will be provided when you register your interest. For more info and to book for a tour see www.superhomes.org.uk/193. 2pm. Free. 01908 256918.

Hanborough Show & Dog Show: Pavilion Playing Fields, Roosevelt Road, Long Hanborough. Horticultural competition displays, friendly dog show, craft and trade stalls and refreshments including a BBQ, a bar, WI teas with homemade cakes. 1.30pm. Free. 01993 881058.

Kings and Castles: Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Park Street, Woodstock. Challenging workshop for ages seven to 10. Booking essential.

1pm. £7.00. 01993 810214.

London's Burning: North Wall Arts Centre, South Parade, Oxford. Science Oxford presents a storytelling experience of the Great Fire of London where the narrative is accompanied by live fire demonstrations which explore the science of heat, flame and combustion. To book visit www.scienceoxford.com 7pm. £9/£5 concession (+ fee). 01865 810000.

Murder Mystery Dining Train: Chinnor & Princes Risborough Railway, Station Approach, Station Road, Chinnor. Solve the clues on a three-courses evening dining train. 6.15pm. Adult £45. 07979 055366.

Oxford to Henley Challenge: Donnington Bridge, Donnington Bridge Road, Oxford. Take on a double marathon distance along the Thames on the inaugural Oxford to Henley Challenge. Finish line celebration at tented village in Henley. Fully supported 84km walk, jog or run with fully signed route. Free hot meal at 42km and finish line. Free breakfast bap at 70km. Free snacks and drinks at all rest stops approx every 14km. Free Oxford to Henley 'commemorative themed buff'. thamespathchallenge.com. 10am. £49/£59 registration fee. 02076 096695.

Oxfordshire and Area WRAC branch: Littlebury Hotel, Kings End, Bicester. 12.30pm. Free. 07756 681441.

Paul Nash and the Wittenham Clumps – Talk and Walk: St Agatha's Church, Brightwell Street, near War Memorial, Brightwell cum Sotwell. For the artist Paul Nash (1889-1946) the Wittenham Clumps were a major source of inspiration. As the Tate's Paul Nash exhibition approaches, two special walks – each beginning with an illustrated talk – will explore Nash's enduring fascination with this landscape and the places where he worked. Details and booking here <http://www.nashclumps.org/news.html> 10am. £15.

Tower & Teas: Parish Church SS Peter & Paul, Church Street, Wantage. 1.30pm. Free. 01235 223554.

SUNDAY

Combe Mill Open: Combe Mill, Blenheim Palace Sawmill, Combe. Volunteers are on hand to explain how this historic workplace was powered by steam and water and to show you what went on here in support of the Blenheim Palaceestate. Tea room and riverside picnic area. 10.30am. Adults £4.50, concessions £3.50, under 5s free. 01993 358694.

Freeland Village Garage Sale: Freeland. Freeland WI is organising a village-wide garage sale. More than 15 households will be taking part, selling household goods, toys, furniture, etc. Pay £1 for a map showing locations. 12pm. 01993 882761.

National Gardens Scheme: Ashbrook House, Blewbury. The garden where Kenneth Grahame read *Wind in the Willows* to local children and where he took inspiration for his description of the oak doors to Badger's House. Come and catch a glimpse of Toad and friends in this 3.5-acre garden. Wheelchair access. Dogs on leads. Teas. 2pm. Adult £4, children free.

The Enormous Crocodile and friends: The Story Museum, Pembroke Street, Oxford. Roald Dahl themed weekend. In collaboration with Science Oxford, the Story Museum brings you a day of hands-on fun, and a chance to meet real crocodiles. Crocodile treasure hunt, build your own crocodile egg nest, help make an enormous crocodile, and hear Dahl stories brought to life on the giant bed. Children must be accompanied by an adult. Sessions: 11am-12pm and 1-2pm. Booking: <https://www.oxfordplayhouse.com/ticketsoxford/#event=20949> £8 / £6

To get an event of any kind listed here, enter the details into our easy-to-use online database at thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/events

Please add your event no later than ten days before the day of publication.

concession. 01865 810000.

MONDAY

Mums Meet Mondays: Rugrats and Halfpints, Beaumont Road, Banbury. 9.30am. £1 per child. 01295 250060.

TUESDAY

Bicester and Kidlington Ramblers: Homebase car park, Launton Road, Bicester. Leisurely four-mile circular walk via Launton. Leader Mary Gough. 10am. 07939 826412.

Natural History Talk: The Community Centre, New Road, Woodstock. Chris Ward 'Brazil: from Rio to Pantanal'. For the Woodstock Natural History Society. 7.30pm. Non-members £2. 01993 812004.

Ramblers walk: Village Centre, Chinnor. Leisurely four-mile walk via Henton. Walk unsuitable for dogs. 10am. 01844 215624.

Samuel Shem 'At the Heart of the Universe': Blackwell's Bookshop, 48-51 Broad Street, Oxford. Author of bestselling novel *The House of God*, Samuel Shem, will discuss his latest novel *At the Heart of the Universe*, an epic novel set deep in rural China against the backdrop of an ancient mountain monastery during the time of Mao's one-child population control policies. 7pm. £5. 01865 333623.

WEDNESDAY

Cotswold Decorative & Fine Arts Society: Bradwell Village Hall, Bradwell, Burford. "Constable and the Making of Masterpieces" by Dr Susan Owens. 10.15am. Non-members welcome (suggested donation £8).

Lions Club of Bicester: Turners Arms, Merton Road, Ambrosden. Help the local community, the Christmas float and make new friends. 8pm. Free. 01869 246948.

Operation GRITLOCK – The UK military response to the Ebola crisis in West Africa: Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Park Street, Woodstock. Brigadier Charlie Herbert commanded the UK military response to the Ebola crisis in Sierra Leone from May-November 2015, as part of the international response to the crisis that engulfed West Africa from early 2014 to late 2015. In this one-off talk he will illustrate the scale and nature of this rather unique military response to a public health emergency in partnership with the Department for International Development and alongside other national and international stakeholders. His experience has committed him to a long-term relationship with those affected by the disease which he will touch on in his presentation. 6.45pm. £15. 01993 810211.

Music

THURSDAY

The Library Pub, 182 Cowley Road, Oxford: Anarquía Vertical, Ultra, Dysteria, Drove. Punk. 7.30pm. Free.

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: Steve Summers Band, Steamroller. The Haven Club. Blues. 8pm. £8, £5 (NUS).

O2 Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Road, Oxford: Pete Rock & CL. One of the most critically-acclaimed acts of 90s hip hop. 7pm. £20.

The Wheatsheaf, 129 High Street, Oxford: The Mighty Redox. All original

psycho-eclectic rock. 9pm. Downstairs bar. Free.

The Jericho Tavern, 56 Walton Street, Oxford: The Quentins. Indie rock. 8pm. £6.

FRIDAY

The White House, Abingdon Road, Oxford: Oxford Folk Club open night. 8.30pm. £2. 01865 768128.

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: The Corsairs, Strike One, CPR. Psychobilly & punk. 7pm. £6.

The Cellar, Frewin Court, Oxford: Camo Clavé, DJ Dan Ofer. Electro-tropical seven-piece band, plus resident DJs playing Latin, Balkan and World beats. 10pm-3am. £7.

O2 Academy Oxford, 190 Cowley Road, Oxford: Evarose, Kone, Wolfs, Kid Kin. Local bands showcase. 7pm. £8.

The Wheatsheaf, 129 High Street, Oxford: Black Skies Burn, RSJ, Raised By Wolves. Rock/metal. 8pm. £7, £5 (students).

The Jericho Tavern, 56 Walton Street, Oxford: Storyteller, Crystalite, Kuiper. Rock & funky reggae. 7pm. £6.

SATURDAY

Church of the Holy Ascension, Littleworth, Faringdon: Welsh Male Voice Choir Concert. 7.30pm. £10 with a glass of wine on arrival. 01367 341328. **Concerts are at St Peter's Church, Thames Street, Wallingford:** The Villiers String Quartet. 8pm. £14 or £12 paid in advance. 01491 824792.

Marston Royal British Legion, Hadow Road, Marston: Jacquie Faye. 8pm. Free. 01865 243991.

Old Fire Station, 40 George Street, Oxford: Ran Kan Kan: A Night In Havana. 8pm. £7 in advance, £8 on the door, £6 concessions. 01865 263990.

Queens Head, 26 Church Road, Horspath: Noisy Neighbours. 9pm. Free. 01865 875567.

Royal Standard, London Road, Headington: Darren Hunt. 8.30pm. Free. 01865 764591.

St Peter's Church First Turn, Wolvercote: Stylus Phantasticus. Thomas Allery plays music from the 17th century *Stylus Phantasticus*, and later high baroque, style. 7.30pm £10 (£8 under 18s, over 60s, unwaged). 01865 559316.

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: Hell's Gazelles, Twisted State Of Mind, Trauma. Local hard rockers on UK tour and album launch. 7pm. £5.

The Wheatsheaf, 129 High Street, Oxford: Silver Ravens, Jinjacooze, Richard Moore. Local bands showcase. 7.45pm. £6.

SUNDAY

St Kenelm's Church, Old Minster Lovell, Minster Lovell: Mother's Union Songs of Praise. 4pm. Donations to St Kenelm's Church Building Appeal.

Oxford Wine Café, 38 South Parade, Summertown, Oxford: Wendy Kirkland's Piano Divas. Vocals/piano, guitar, bass and drums. 6.30-9pm. Free.

MONDAY

The Royal Blenheim, 13 St Ebbes Street, Oxford: Open mic hosted by Scott Gordon. 8pm. Free.

TUESDAY

The Bullingdon, 162 Cowley Road, Oxford: Hugh Turner band. Top guitarist

fronts his quartet. Bop/funk jazz. 8.30pm. Free.

The Library Pub, 182 Cowley Road, Oxford: Mystic Inane, Scrap Brain, Basic Dicks. Punk. 8pm. Free.

WEDNESDAY

The Wheatsheaf, 129 High Street, Oxford: Lowly Hounds, Vagueworld, Samuel Edwards. Indie blues-rock & punk-pop. 7.45pm. £6.

1855, 4 Oxford Castle, New Road, Oxford: Martin Pickett Jazz Trio. Jazz with a modern twist. 7-9.30pm. Free.

Theatre

Burton Taylor Studio, Beaumont Street, Oxford: Sep 8-9, *The Eulogy of Toby Peach*. Toby has come to deliver his eulogy. Join him as he enters the (not so) exclusive Cancer Club; sample chemotherapy cocktails, select the perfect funeral playlist and marvel at Willy Wonka's life-saving stem cell machine. 7.30pm. £10 (£8). Sep 10, *Pinocchio*. Puppetry, shadows, illusion and original music. 11am and 2pm. £10 (£6). Sep 12, *Until You Hear That Bell*. Told through spoken word and within timed boxing rounds, a story about amateur boxing and family. 7.30pm. £10 (£8). Sep 13, *Equations for a Moving Body*. Written and performed by Hannah Nicklin. 7.30pm. £10 (£8). 01865 305305.

Glee Club, Hythe Bridge Street, Oxford: Sep 10, Javier Jardin and Elliot Steele. 7.15pm. £14.50. Sep 17, Anthony J Brown and John Hastings. 7.15pm. £14.50. 0871 472 04007.

Old Fire Station, 40 George Street, Oxford: Sep 8, *Undermined*. Inspired by the accounts of miners who lived through the strike, depicting a year where friendships were strengthened and communities came together. 8pm. £10, £8. Sep 13-17, *Brief Lives*. 7.30pm plus 2.30pm on Sat. £15, £12 (concs). All matinee tickets: £12. 01865 263990.

Oxford Playhouse, Beaumont Street, Oxford: Until Sep 10, *Glasgow Girls*. Based on the true story of seven feisty teenagers, whose lives changed forever when their school friend and her asylum-seeking family are forcibly taken from their home to be deported. Various times. £11.50-£27. Sep 12-17, *Relatively Speaking*. By Alan Ayckbourn, With Robert Powell and Liza Goddard. Various times. £15-£31. Sep 20-24, *A Tale of Two Cities*. 7.30pm. £11.50-£27. 01865 305305.

New Theatre, George Street, Oxford: Until Sep 10, *The Sound of Music*. 7.30pm and 2.30pm matinees. £17.90-£48.90 plus £4 transaction fee. Sep 17, *The Carpenters Story*. 7.30pm. £24.90-£26.90 plus £2.85 transaction fee. 0844 871 7615.

The North Wall Arts Centre, South Parade, Oxford: Sep 14, *Cargo*. Written by Tess Berry-Hart. A tense thriller that reveals how much people are willing to risk in search of a better life. 8pm. £14; concessions £12. 01865 319450.

The Story Museum, Pembroke Street, Oxford: Sep 10, *The BFG*. 2pm. £8/£6. 01865 790050.

Chipping Norton Theatre, Spring Street, Chipping Norton: Sep 9, *Bette Midler and Me*. West End star Sue Kelvin and Chipping Norton panto composer Sarah Travis star in a show celebrating the life and songs of the Divine Miss M from the perspective of a life-long fan. 7.45pm. £16 (£14). Sep 14-24, *The Rise and Fall of Little Voice*. Musical Comedy. 7.30pm and 2.30pm. £17.50, concessions £15, schools £8.50.

Sep 18, Marcus Brigstocke: Why the long face? 7.45pm. £17.50. 01608 642350.

Cornerstone, Station Road, Didcot: Sep 17, *John Hegley: Peace, Love and Potatoes*. Comedy. 8pm. £15, concs £13.50, members £12. 01235 515144.

CakeSport

banburycake.co.uk/sport

Bulls fall just short in opener

BANBURY fell to an 18-15 defeat to local rivals Witney in their first game back in the sixth tier.

The north Oxfordshire side put in a promising performance at a rain-soaked Hailey Road as their county counterparts took the spoils in South West 1 East.

Witney led 18-3 at the break, thanks to tries from Callum Godfrey and Jake Thomas, as well as eight points from the boot of Henry Lamb.

Alex Stevenson kicked a penalty for Bulls.

The visitors ramped up the pressure in the second half, with winger Josh Deegan and centre Matt Goode crossing for unconverted tries.

Banbury were camped inside Witney's 22 for the rest of the match, but the hosts held strong to claim victory.



Banbury centre Matt Goode looks to make up ground during his side's 18-15 defeat to Witney

Picture: Steve Wheeler

Puritans through

Barcelos hits two goals as Ford's men advance in cup

FELIPE Barcelos hit a brace as Banbury United booked their place in the second qualifying round of the Emirates FA Cup with a 3-0 win at Dorchester Town.

Victory over their Evo-Stik Southern League Premier Division counterparts marked only the Puritans' second success in the competition in ten seasons.

They will now face Cirencester Town away in the next round on Saturday, September 17.

Banbury took the lead

on 31 minutes when Leam Howards was fouled in the penalty area and Ricky Johnson scored his 50th goal for the club from the spot.

The hosts dominated the early stages of the second half, but Banbury made it 2-0 on 54 minutes when Barcelos netted.

And just moments later the Brazilian forward made it 3-0 to ensure the Puritans advanced.

Banbury Utd: Harding, White, Blackstock, Nash, Fawke, Gunn, Barcelos (Browne 66), Self (Davies 89), Johnson, Howards (Jones 51), Westbrook.

Subs not used: Martin, Rimmer.

Attendance: 249.

Banbury drop to fourth after abandonment

BANBURY missed out on a place in the top three as their season-finale at Slough fell foul of the weekend's heavy rain.

It means Lloyd Sabin's side finish fourth in Division 1, with High Wycombe, who beat Reading, leapfrogging them on the final day of the Home Counties Premier League.

Banbury were dismissed for 199 after electing to bat. Teenage opener Olly Clarke top-scored with 45, while captain Lloyd Sabin contributing 33.

Slough were on 78-3 in reply when the match was abandoned.

Banbury 199 (50 ovs, O Clarke 45, L Sabin 33, A Blanchard 32, Z Sher 5-25) v Slough 78-3 - RSP.

FINAL TABLE

Division 1										
	P	W	D	L	A	Bon	Pts			
* Finchampstead	18	13	1	2	2	20	329			
Henley	18	11	4	2	1	41	294			
High Wycombe	18	9	3	5	1	58	273			
Banbury	18	9	2	3	4	39	264			
Slough	18	6	3	4	4	59	244			
Tring Park	18	6	3	7	2	62	213			
* Burnham	18	6	3	8	1	75	175			
Gt & Lt Tew	18	4	2	9	3	61	175			
* Reading	18	2	1	13	2	83	142			
Harefield	18	1	0	14	2	77	121			

* - pts deducted

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ARIES Mar 21-Apr 19
A close ones jealousy is becoming a problem and you may find it better to distance yourself from those who bring you down, rather than confront them. Family prove tiresome with their demands for something you did not want to give and you still don't. Talk, don't shout to maintain the upper hand. Ring now to hear why it's worth making solo projects joint ones this week.
0906 585 4360

TAURUS Apr 20-May 20
A really tired feel to your chart could see you saying and doing things you will come to regret. Slow your pace and make a list of your priorities. It can help ensure that you get what needs to be done sorted out, even if the rest has to wait a little longer. You can only do so much, so don't set impossible standards for yourself. Ring now to hear how you're more psychic this September.
0906 585 4361

GEMINI May 21-Jun 20
Although you did not mean to spill a secret, you did and this week you have to take responsibility for sharing news which was not yours to give. Stand tall and tell the truth, it is the only way you'll get understanding and forgiveness from those concerned. Uranus helps you to realise an ambition and you start to shape your days to suit yourself rather than others. Ring now to run with your dreams.
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CANCER Jun 21-Jul 22
The gift of clear vision is yours and you start to see with ease what needs to be done to make your life a more enjoyable place to be. Someone who was not free will be soon and they appear to be heading in your direction. Try to spend some time working out what you want and need from a relationship. Ring now to hear how new friends could lead you to a new home town eventually.
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LEO Jul 23-Aug 22
Saturn's honesty has helped you to see close ones for who they really are and, this week, you take steps to move away from those who bring you down or add stress to your life. Visiting places from your past helps you get in touch with your emotions and you work out what you do and do not want by Friday, with some pretty explosive results. Ring now so I can give you a preview.
0906 585 4364

VIRGO Aug 23-Sep 22
Family bonds grow stronger and you no longer worry that you are alone, for you see and feel that you are a unit and that those who tried to break you can no longer harm you. You've come a long way and I have to say I'm proud of how much work you've done on yourself. A Gemini links to a work change you can and should pursue. Ring now to make the most of your dramatic stars.
0906 585 4365

LIBRA Sep 23-Oct 22
A change you have been resisting could actually be to your advantage, so try to put aside a little time and space to think about what you may be impulsively turning down. The invitation to an alternative night out should be accepted, as it offers you the chance to see a certain person in a more relaxed atmosphere. Ring now to hear how education links are worth renewing this month.
0906 585 4366

SCORPIO Oct 23-Nov 21
Although an idea you had was rejected earlier in the month, it could be accepted if you try again. It's all about the power of positive thinking this week. Younger faces tell unnecessary lies, but may have felt as if they had no choice or that they were backed into a corner. Wear blue for luck in business. Ring now to hear which friend could be more suited as a lover.
0906 585 4367

SAGITTARIUS Nov 22-Dec 21
Your ruling planet Jupiter helps you to gain the upper hand in a financial matter which was getting the better of you. Aspects suggest that your family circle is about to widen. Try to show a welcoming attitude to all new faces, as your first reaction will be remembered more than you may think. Ring now to hear how Mars hands you the power to negotiate well this Friday.
0906 585 4368

CAPRICORN Dec 22-Jan 19
I know you think a forced change is your downfall, but it actually has many positive aspects, as you would see for yourself if you took a few of those defences down. An event you thought was cancelled for midweek is likely to go ahead, so make sure you are prepped and prepared. Ring now to hear why it's worth spending more time checking on older faces this weekend.
0906 585 4369

AQUARIUS Jan 20-Feb 18
You are the one who has the power to stop arguments and family tension, but you seem to have your mind on other things. Stop and take a breath. Think about where your priorities should lie and you'll soon see where your time and energy is needed. A financial link to a far away town or country goes in your favour. Ring now so we can talk about those confusing emotions.
0906 585 4370

PISCES Feb 19-Mar 20
The emotional chapter you went through recently is replaced by a more confident one and you start to feel ready to take on the things you shied away from previously. Minor health ailments need sorting out before they become major issues for you. Jupiter helps you shine socially in front of those you want to impress. Ring now so I can tell you about your week in full.
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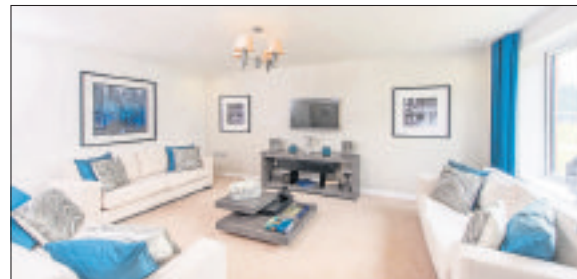
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A Bourne View showhome interior; top right, a showhome at Longford Park and, right, James and Rebecca Bell

Young couple get on the ladder with special offer

MONEY-OFF deals helped a young couple climb on to the property ladder.

Car showroom sales manager James Bell and wife Rebecca, an events manager, were house hunting in the area around Mr Bell's workplace in Kiddingington.

The couple, both 28, snapped up a three-bedroom house at Bourne View in Hook Norton earlier this year.

As part of the package, housebuilder Taylor Wimpey covered

Gill Oliver
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the costs of their stamp duty bill and legal fees.

Mr Bell said: "We were able to buy our new home a lot sooner than we thought thanks to Taylor Wimpey's special offer.

"We even got integrated kitchen appliances and turf in the garden included in the price – and it's those

extra costs which can start to mount up, so we were really pleased that Taylor Wimpey offered to pay."

He added: "For a first home, it has everything we need.

"Hook Norton is a really nice area to live.

"Everyone is very friendly and the village is lovely.

"Moving here has also knocked off 25 minutes each way on my way to work, which is one of the main reasons we wanted to relocate."

Bourne View includes three- and four-bedroom homes.

Although it is now sold out, Taylor Wimpey is marketing similar properties at its Longford Park development in Banbury.

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To find out more, visit Longford Park's sales centre off Oxford Road, Banbury, OX15 4FX, which is open daily from 10am to 5pm (Mondays 1pm to 5pm).

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24 Quarry Close

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Astra-nomical value?



THE Vauxhall Astra feels like a bit of a national institution, a nameplate that has signified a small, affordable family hatchback for over three decades. The range has grown over the years and was especially wide in sixth generation guise, with the core five-door model joined by a capacious estate, a coupe-like three door GTC model and a tyre shredding VXR hot hatch. The MK6 Astra was introduced in late 2009, but here, we're going to concentrate on the facelifted line-up, which arrived in 2012 and lasted Vauxhall until the seventh generation version's introduction in the Autumn of 2015.

You'll find plenty of these late-model MK6 Astras about – and they appear to offer plenty for the money. This Vauxhall can prove to be a very efficient choice too, if you select your engine carefully. Pick one of the newer turbocharged petrol engines or a frugal 1.6, 1.7 or 2.0 litre diesel, then match your choice to a plush trim level and you've potentially got a cracking used buy. We show you why.

The History

Despite Vauxhall's best efforts over thirty years and five different generations, their Astra has rarely been the family hatchback its drivers would ideally have chosen to own. Not because it's ever been a bad car; just never a class-leading one. The kind of model you bought because it was good value. Or more likely, because you were given the keys by your company Fleet Manager. At the launch of this MK6 version in 2009 though, greater efforts than ever before were made to ensure that 'want one' factor. So it was bigger, sharper to drive and nicer to sit in. And back then, it looked like a very complete proposition indeed.

By 2012 though, much had changed in the family hatchback segment. The intervening period saw the introduction of all-new versions of this car's closest two segment rivals, Ford's Focus and Volkswagen's Golf, as well as complete re-designs of other important sector contenders like SEAT's Leon, Honda's Civic and Toyota's Auris. Plus there was the rise of the South

Koreans, with new generation versions of the Kia cee'd and Hyundai i30, models that had become increasingly difficult for family hatchback buyers to ignore. Hence the need, in the Autumn of 2012, for a package of Astra changes designed to keep this car current in such an increasingly close-fought family hatchback sector. These created the smarter, higher-tech, more efficient car we're looking at here.

What To Look For

As is always the case with mainstream family hatches, you'll want to keep a look out for thrashed company hacks or ex-hire fleet vehicles. Ensure that the car has been serviced on the button and that the mileage on the service record stamp tallies with what the odometer says. It's also worth checking the car for accident damage, as many cars will be de-fleeted early if they've had a prang and have been repaired. Ask the seller explicitly if the car has had accident damage and inspect the usual points for overspray and kinks in the under-bonnet flitch plates. The engines

tend to be tough units with no serious problems to report.

On The Road

Back in the steam age, an inventor called James Watt (remember his name from school history lessons?) invented a linkage system created to constrain the movement of a steam engine piston in a straight line. Over a century later, this Astra's engineers turned again to the same concept. When applied to a car's rear suspension, this Watts linkage reduces sideways motion between the axle and the body of the car in a way that they claim is more space-efficient, lighter and adjustable than the multi-link rear suspensions used in the Focus or the Golf.

Here, it's a case of knowing your engine. To be honest, the budget-level 1.4 or 1.6-litre normally aspirated entry-level petrol units represent older and resolutely unremarkable Vauxhall technology, even if the performance they offer (rest to sixty in 14s on the way to 105mph in the case of the base 87PS 1.4 16v variant) will probably be

enough for most. Unfortunately, the far superior 1.4 and 1.6-litre petrol turbo units were limited to buyers of the sporty SRi trim level and to GTC coupe customers who also got a 280PS 2.0-litre powerplant in the top-of-the-range VXR hot hatch.

Overall

There are lots of options if you're looking for a family hatchback from the 2012 to 2015 period and in a class packed with noteworthy cars, it would be easy perhaps, to overlook this facelifted MK6 model Astra – or at least to assume it to be an also-ran in this tightly-fought segment. You shouldn't do that – and it isn't. Or at least it isn't if you choose your engine and spec carefully. The really desirable and efficient variants may well require you to negotiate a sharp deal with your seller to keep within budget, but if you can do that, then you'll get yourself a lot of car for the money. And, as ever with an Astra, there's a huge selection of used vehicles to choose from, so be patient and negotiate hard. Do that and you'll almost certainly come away with a very good deal. On a surprisingly good car.

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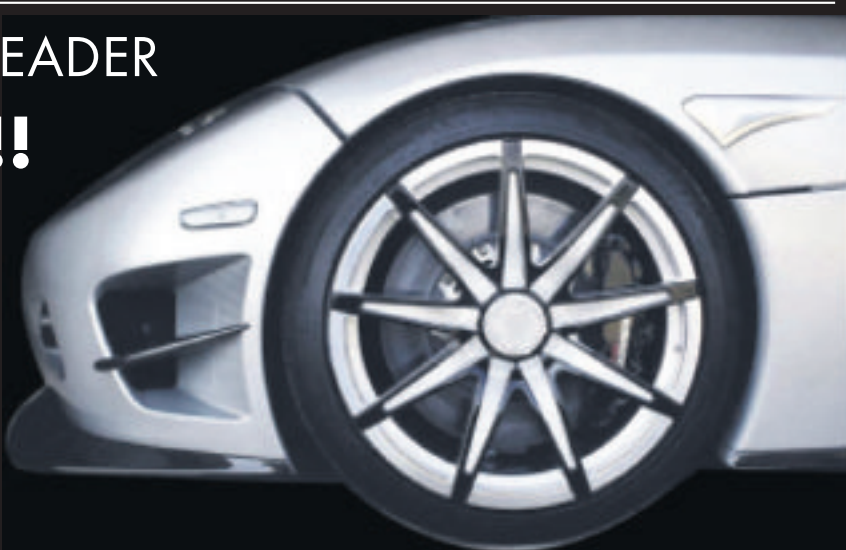
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